

HENRY VIII AND PHARMACY

I.—Royal Recipes for Plasters Ointments and Other Medicaments

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A BRILLIANT and versatile person, a scholar according to the standard of his time, and a lover of knowledge, Henry VIII seems to have concerned himself seriously and directly with the condition and practice of medical science through most of the thirty-eight years of his reign. He came to the throne in 1509 and immediately issued the first English Act which regulated the practice of medicine. The Act forbade "unlicenst folk" to practise, and laid down rules for examination and licence. Nine years later the great Linacre, one of Henry's earliest physicians, was granted a charter constituting the Royal College of Physicians, to-day the oldest-existing purely medical institution in Europe. The Act of 1509 had not been effectively enforced, and treatment by empirics, quacks and unlettered clergy continued, evils which are recited in Linacre's charter:—

"Before this period a great multitude of ignorant persons, of whom the greater part had no insight into physic, nor in any other kind of learning; some could not even read the letter on the book, so far forth, that common artificers, as smiths, weavers and women, boldly and accustomedly took upon them great cures, to the high displeasure of God, great infamy of the faculty, and the grievous hurt, damage and destruction of many of the King's liege people."

The body corporate thus founded had the sole privilege of admitting persons to practise as physicians inside an area covered by a seven-mile circle round the City of London. In addition to this charter and the Act of 1509, five other Acts of Parliament dealing with medicine and surgery were passed during Henry VIII's reign, in all of which he directly interested himself, including the most famous one of 1540, of which every schoolboy has heard, incorporating the Barber Surgeons' Company. In the last of Henry's medical statutes which permitted unlicensed persons to treat simple

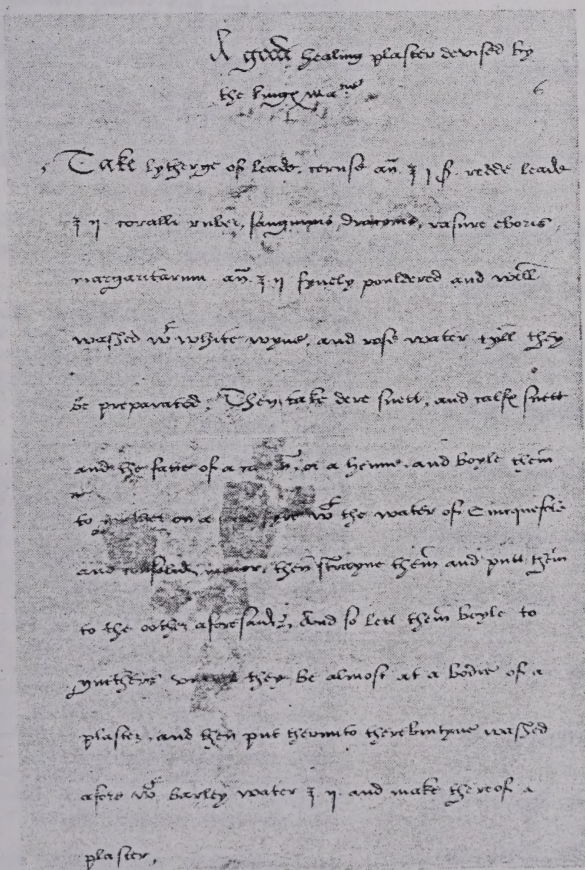
diseases the apothecaries were recognised (even then, apparently, it was recognised that it was not practical politics to prohibit everything!).

Henry VIII had a number of accomplished personal physicians. Thomas Linacre has already been mentioned. In the Letters Patent constituting the Royal College of Physicians, the second name that appears is that of John Chambre, of Merton College, Oxford, who was also one of the Court physicians. Others were Sir Walter Butts, Dr. Walter Cromer and Dr. Augustin.

Dr. John Chambre (1470-1549), sometimes spelt Chambers or Chambyr, was a fellow of Merton College, Oxford, in 1492. Then he took holy orders and went to Italy to study medicine, graduating at Padua. Oxford made him M.D. in 1531, rather late in life.

He had been physician to Henry VII—no easy post—and was, apparently, Henry VIII's favourite medical attendant. At one time he held three livings, and was successively a prebendary, archdeacon and canon, ending up as Dean of St. Stephen's, Westminster.

Sir William Butts (d. 1545) was even more successful as a courtier than John Chambre. He was not only physician to Henry VIII, who paid him £100 a year, but from 1524 until his death was regularly at the Court and, in addition to a considerable practice among the nobility acted as a physician to two of the queens—Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour—as well as to the Princess Mary, afterwards Queen Mary. Mary gave him a special livery and clothing for two servants and an apothecary, marks of definite favour. Wolsey and the Duke of Norfolk were also among his patients. Butts was M.D. of Cambridge. Little is known of Dr. Walter Cromer, or Cromire; he was a Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1530, and king's physician. Dr. Augustin was a Fellow in 1536 and physician to Wolsey.



A GOODE HEALING PLASTER
"Devised by the Kinges majestie"

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Others of the Royal plasters are described as "devised to resolve and mollify payne"; or as "a goode healing plaster"; one made at Westminster was "devised to ease the payne and swelling about the ancles." They are transcribed below.

A GOODE healing plaster devised by the Kinges matie.

TAKE lytherge of leade, ceruse an. ʒiiss. redde leade ʒij. coralli ruber. sanguinis draconis, rasure eboris, margaritarum an. ʒij. fynely pouldered and well washed wt white wyne, and rose water tyll they be prepared. Then take dere suett, and calfe suett and the fatte of a [?], or a henne, and boyle them to gether on a softe fyre wt the water of Cinquefole and [?] maior, then strayne them and putt them to the oother aforesaide, And so lett them boyle to guethere untill they be almost at a bodie of a plaster, and then put therunto therebintyne washed afore wt barley water ʒij. and make thereof a plaster.

A PLASTRE devised by the Kinges grace at westm[inster], to ease the payne and swelling about the ancles.

TAKE oyle of lillies washed wt white wyne and water of chamomell flowres ʒvi. redde corall combusted, and fynely pouldered ʒij. tutie preparat fynely pouldered ʒij. Boyle yor oyle wt these poulders over a softe fyre evermore styring it, then [?] putt thereto the muscillage of marsh mallowes, [?] and psley of ech ʒj. boyle them to guether till they be plaster lyke, then putt therto of white waxe ʒj. And when it is well bodied, take it from the fire, and in the cooling putt therto these poulders folowing of long wormes lytte [?], and well washed in white wyne of rose leaves fynely pouldered, chamomell flowers, and mellilote flowers an. [?] ʒiiss. Et fiat emplastrum.

OF the other twenty-four plasters sixteen are unnamed, the remaining eight being made by the four doctors either singly or two or more in collaboration. One is made in different consistencies for summer and winter use. Following the thirty-five ordinary plasters are four "spasmadraps" or "dipped plasters," two of them being by Dr. Butts (Sir William Butts). Then we have fifty recipes for "Oyntments," two of which are transcribed below. Fourteen ointments are devised by the king and two white ointments are described as "made for the king."

AN OYNTMENT devised by the Kinges matie at Cawode to drye excoriations and comforte the membre called the swete Oyntment.

TAKE oyle of roses well washed wt warme white wyne viij. ʒ redde leade ʒij. redde corall ʒij. margarites ʒj. cornu vnicornu ʒij. Boyle all yor metalles and oyle to guether tyll it be vnguent lyke, Then put in these juces folowing of eche one vnce, and a half besides the fire evermore styring, tyll they be wrought all in, woode bynde, mallowes, plantaigne, the tender leaves of the Aple tree, and solatre, and cast of all the pouldre of chamomell flowres, violet flowres, rose leaves, and ireos of ech dd vnce, et fiat.

A GRENE oyntment devised by the Kinges hieghnes to take awaye heate, and Indurations, and to resolve and ease payne.

TAKE the fatte of capons ʒxij. well washed wt the water of lymondes, then drawe the muscillage of these thinges folowing wt rose water, and wt the water of ["night shade" erased] lymondes. Take of quynseede, lynesede, psillii, et radiciis Althee and ʒj. then take these metalles fynely pouldered and prepared wt rose water, and water of lymondes of lytherge of golde ʒij. redde leade ʒij. redde corall ʒj. Then boyle all these thinges to guether tyll it be vnguent lyke: then worke in these juces folowing. of violet leaves, mallowe leaves, solatre hennebayne, chamomell flowres and rose buddes ana ʒj., And last of all worke in white wyne and water of lymondes as much as shall suffice. Et fiat.

NEXT follow five "balmes" for "woundes, palseyes and agues," in which the king had no share. One, the only recipe in Latin in the whole MS., is truly entitled "Aqua mirabilis vel mater Balsami," for it contains a total of forty-nine ingredients or mixtures of ingredients. Henry or his physicians are rather to be commended for limiting such concoctions to one or two in a total of 114. The remainder of the MS. is concerned with twelve waters, lotions or decoctions and eight "cataplasmes or pultices," four of the first set being by the king and three of the second. We transcribe the following:

A CATAPLASME made yngtment lyke of the Kinges Maties devise made at westm[inster]

TAKE a quarte of mylke, a fyne manchett, a handfull of mallowes, a handfull of rose leaves. Boyle these to guether tyll they be softe, then strayne them, and drawe the pulpe of them and putt therto the muscillage of psillii ʒj. the yolke of ij. newe layd egges, the pouldre of long wormes well washed and dried ʒss. the pouldre of mellilote flowres, and chamomell flowres, of eche half an vnce, oyle of gardeyn lillies as muche as shall suffice. Et fiat.

A PULTHE devised by the Kinges Matie at hampton courte.

TAKE violett leaves. night shade, of eche ij. handfull, chamomell flowres one handfull, mallowes ij. handfull, rose leaves one handfull, swete appuls iiij. a manchett, Boyle all these to guether in swete mylke tyll they be tendre, then strayne them and putt therto the muscillage of lynesede, and of holyocke roote, and of figges of eche ij. vneces and the yolke of ij. newe layd egges oyle of lillies, and oyle of swete . . .

The use of lead and turpentine in the plasters is as sound straightforward practice as the casual inclusion of the fabulous unicorn in an ointment is curious. Presumably substitutes for the genuine unicorn horn were readily available. The other recipes, if a little lengthy, and requiring much wine and rose water, are clearly not without practical value. They were probably tested on the royal person.

2—Notes on Accounts Paid to the Royal Apothecaries in 1546 and 1547

By HOWARD BAYLES

THE exact extent of Henry the Eighth's medical knowledge will probably never be known. We know, however, on evidence which it is the chief purpose of this article to set forth, that in the last few months of his life he was ordered considerable quantities of medicine for internal and external use, and that there were at the same time three or four apothecaries in the royal household. From the year 1540 (and possibly earlier) till the King's death in 1547, Thomas Alsop, John de

Sodo and John Emmyngwey received quarterly salaries as apothecaries on the establishment; and on November 30, 1546, Patrick Reynolde was given office in the same capacity. The "Letters and Papers . . . of the Reign of Henry VIII" contain numerous references to the sums paid to the first three of these apothecaries; collating the entries, we find that Alsop (described as "gentleman poticary") and de Sodo (who was "poticary to the Lady Mary") each received £6 13s. 4d. a quarter, while Emmyngwey (a "yeoman

